

2003-04 WorkFirst Local Area Planning - Innovative Project Funding Request

1. Describe your project:

Moving On Up: A Work Preparation Program For TANF Teens will prepare teenagers to enter the labor market by teaching the skills necessary for work preparation. This project will support the overall WorkFirst performance goal—caseload reduction—by showing young people that there are practical alternatives to TANF and by diverting them from ever coming onto the TANF cash assistance program. Moving On Up will strive to alter the belief commonly held by this population that the only life available to them is within the culture of poverty and long-term welfare dependency. Moving On Up is designed to assist adolescents to develop skills needed to move into post-high school vocational training and/or employment and to be successful in their own lives. Moving On Up seeks to prevent TANF teens from coming onto public assistance grants in their own right and thus continuing the cycle of welfare dependency perpetuated by their parents. Moving On Up is an innovative project in that it aspires to close off the negative dead end of TANF dependency as an option for teens by opening up positive avenues for self-enhancement, self-expression, and economic achievement for them. Moving On Up will seek to inspire and facilitate possibility thinking for TANF teens who may currently have only negative and fatalistic concepts about the future.

Approximately 15-25 adolescents will be served through Moving On Up.

No additional resources other than funds from the WorkFirst Innovative Project grant will be utilized for the program.

2. What makes this project innovative:

There is a huge unserved need in Jefferson County to prevent adolescents who are currently part of a TANF household from continuing the cycle of welfare dependency by going onto TANF themselves as “the next generation” of welfare recipients. Moving On Up seeks to divert TANF teens from emulating and adhering to the culture of welfare by educating them about economic alternatives available to them through education and by providing a framework to help them realize that they *are* individuals capable of doing sustained, productive life-work planning. By facilitating participants’ self-awareness and enhancing their self-esteem, Moving On Up may also prevent repeat pregnancies, a phenomenon very highly correlated with an increase in TANF caseloads.

The desired outcome of establishing MOU is weekly meetings for TANF teens, facilitated by a certified mental health counselor.

As a result of these weekly meetings, a significant percentage of program participants will be prevented from going onto TANF, as they will have sampled other community resources available to them, including employment and training opportunities, and will have gotten the message that there are more positive directions to move towards than a life of welfare dependency.

Should Moving On Up prove to be successful, strategies to support funding beyond initial support from the WorkFirst Innovative Project Funding program are currently under discussion.

The success of Moving On Up will be measured by the number and percentage of group participants who do not transition onto TANF within the six month period after MOU ends. A survey to be conducted six months after this initial assessment will then measure the number of participants who are in full-time educational programs, are employed, and/or have successfully utilized methods of birth control to prevent pregnancy.

3. Who are the partners that will be involved in the project:

The Port Townsend and Jefferson County WorkFirst Local Planning Area partnerships will be directly involved in the establishment and success of Moving On Up.

The new partner involved in the project is Sherry NeSmith, certified mental health practitioner, through her organization, Roots and Wings Counseling.

At this time, it is anticipated that no resources other than funding from the WorkFirst Innovative Project program will be used to support Moving On Up in Jefferson County

All WorkFirst partners (DSHS, ESD, Peninsula College, Olympic Community Action) will be able to refer youth ages 16-21 to the project. ESD will have a primary role in presenting job search techniques to group participants and in helping them prepare for the realities of the world of work.